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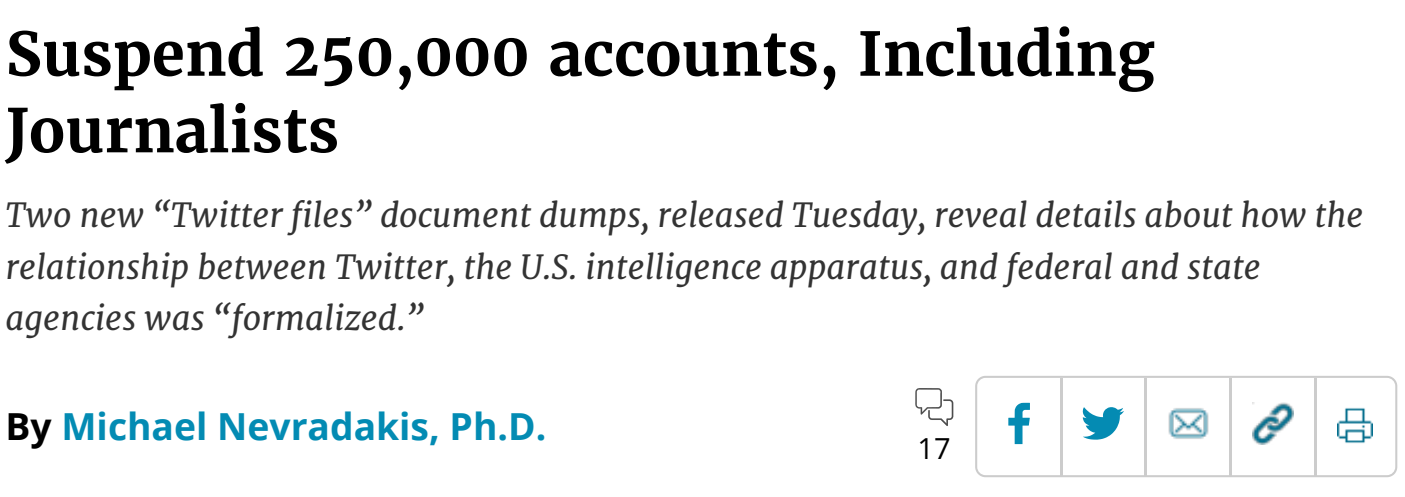
U.S. Government Demanded Twitter Suspend 250,000 accounts, Including Journalists

Two new "Twitter files" document dumps, released Tuesday, reveal details about how the relationship between Twitter, the U.S. intelligence apparatus, and federal and state agencies was "formalized."

By Michael Nevradakis, Ph.D.

17



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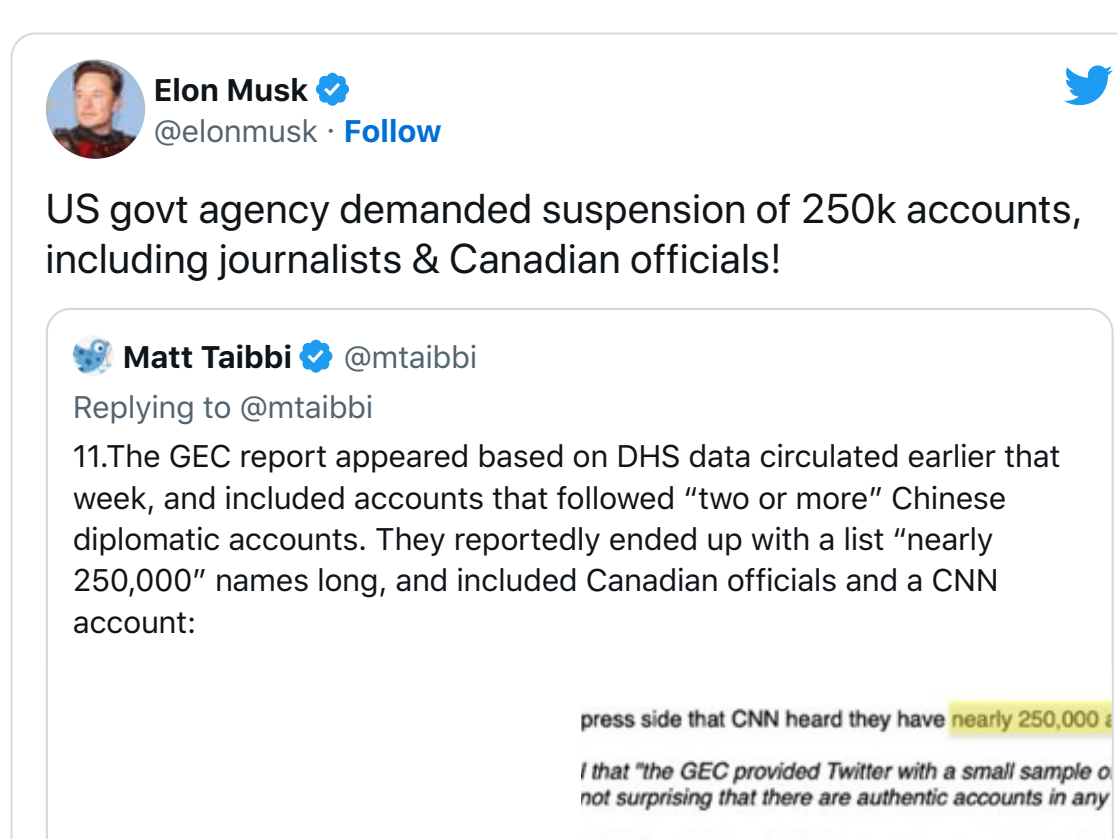
Two new "Twitter files" document dumps, released Tuesday, reveal details about how the relationship between Twitter, the U.S. intelligence apparatus, and federal and state agencies was "formalized."

Journalist Matt Taibbi, in a long series of tweets, released the two latest "Twitter files" installments, which he titled, "How Twitter Let the Intelligence Community In" and "Twitter and the FBI 'Belly Button.'"

The latest documents demonstrate how Twitter, despite some initial resistance, capitulated to stifling pressure from the government and from complicit media outlets and academic actors to crack down on supposed Russian and Chinese influence on the platform and to ban specific accounts.

Such pressure included threats by the Global Engagement Center (GEC) — an arm of the U.S. Department of State — to publicize a list of 250,000 Twitter accounts that were following "two or more" Chinese diplomatic accounts. According to Taibbi, this list was derived from Department of Homeland Security (DHS) data.

Following the release of this latest tranche of documents, Twitter owner and CEO Elon Musk drew attention to the U.S. government's targeting of these 250,000 accounts, tweeting:



Elon Musk
@elonmusk · Follow

US govt agency demanded suspension of 250k accounts, including journalists & Canadian officials!

Matt Taibbi @mtaibbi
Replying to @mtaibbi
11.The GEC report appeared based on DHS data circulated earlier that week, and included accounts that followed "two or more" Chinese diplomatic accounts. They reportedly ended up with a list "nearly 250,000" names long, and included Canadian officials and a CNN account:

3:42 PM · Jan 3, 2023

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Taibbi: Once the intelligence community entered Twitter, 'it would not leave'

According to Taibbi, in 2017, Twitter quickly "went from believing it did not have a 'Russia problem' to permanently allowing the 'USIC' [U.S. intelligence community] into its moderation process" — resulting in the large-scale removal of accounts from the platform.

In the summer of 2017, "Twitter wasn't worried" about having "a Russia problem," Taibbi said. A Sept. 6, 2017, internal email from Colin Crowell, Twitter's then-vice president of Public Policy, confirmed this, at a time when the "spotlight" was "on FB [Facebook]."

A "cursory review" by Twitter in September of that year led to the platform informing the U.S. Senate that it "suspended 22 possible Russian accounts, and 179 others with 'possible links' to those accounts."

Senate Democrats, however, were not pleased with these "meager results," according to Taibbi. Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.), the "ranking Democrat on the Intelligence Committee … held an immediate press conference to denounce Twitter's report as 'frankly inadequate on every level.'"

The heat was on for Twitter, according to Taibbi, who noted, "After meeting with congressional leaders, Crowell wrote: 'Warner has political incentive to keep this issue at top of the news, maintain pressure on us and rest of industry to keep producing material for them.'"

Crowell also noted that Senate Democrats "were taking cues from Hillary Clinton," who just that week had said, "It's time for Twitter to stop dragging its heels and live up to the fact that its platform is being used as a tool for cyber-warfare."

This pressure and the "PR problems" Twitter faced led the platform to form a "Russia Task Force." Despite utilizing "data shared from counterparts at Facebook, centered around accounts supposedly tied to Russia's Internet Research Agency (IRA)," "the search for Russian perfidy was a dud" with "no evidence of a coordinated approach."

According to an Oct. 18, 2017, internal Twitter report, the "task force" found, in the first round of its investigation, "15 high risk accounts, 3 of which have connections with Russia, although 2 are RT [Russia Today].'" A "new version of the model" used to investigate did not identify "substantially more suspicious accounts."

By Oct. 23, 2017, the "task force" completed its investigation. After "2,500 full manual account reviews" a mere "32 suspicious accounts" were located, "only 17 of those [were] connected with Russia," and "only 2 of those have significant spend [on advertising] one of which is Russia Today."

According to Taibbi, the same data used by Twitter to determine that there were only two "significant" accounts was soon used by outlets such as The New York Times for "panic headlines" such as "Russian Influence Reached 126 Million Through Facebook Alone," published Oct. 30, 2017.

The federal government, intelligence and media establishments were again not pleased with Twitter, and in the words of Taibbi, this "worsened the company's PR."

Subsequently, "a torrent of stories sourced to the Intel Committee poured into the news," such as an Oct. 13, 2017, Politico article entitled "Twitter deleted data potentially crucial to Russia probes."

As a result, wrote Taibbi, Twitter "changed its tune about the smallness of its Russia problem," in the face of "costly legislation" threatened by Congress. Internal documents revealed worries that this would adversely impact the platform's political advertising.

At this time, Taibbi said, "Twitter leaders were told by Senate staff that 'Sen. Warner feels like [the] tech industry was in denial for months'" and that there was "big interest" in the Senate in the "Politico article about deleted accounts." As a result, Twitter "pledged to work with them on their desire to legislate."

Even this pledge on the part of Twitter did not appear to be enough, Taibbi said. "Even as Twitter prepared to change its ads policy and remove RT and Sputnik to placate Washington, Congress turned the heat up more, apparently leaking the larger, base list of 2700 accounts" Twitter had identified.

Following this, "Reporters from all over started to call Twitter about Russia links" — as did academics, including a joint project from Buzzfeed and the University of Sheffield, which "claimed to find a 'new network' on Twitter" with "close connections to … Russian-linked bot accounts."

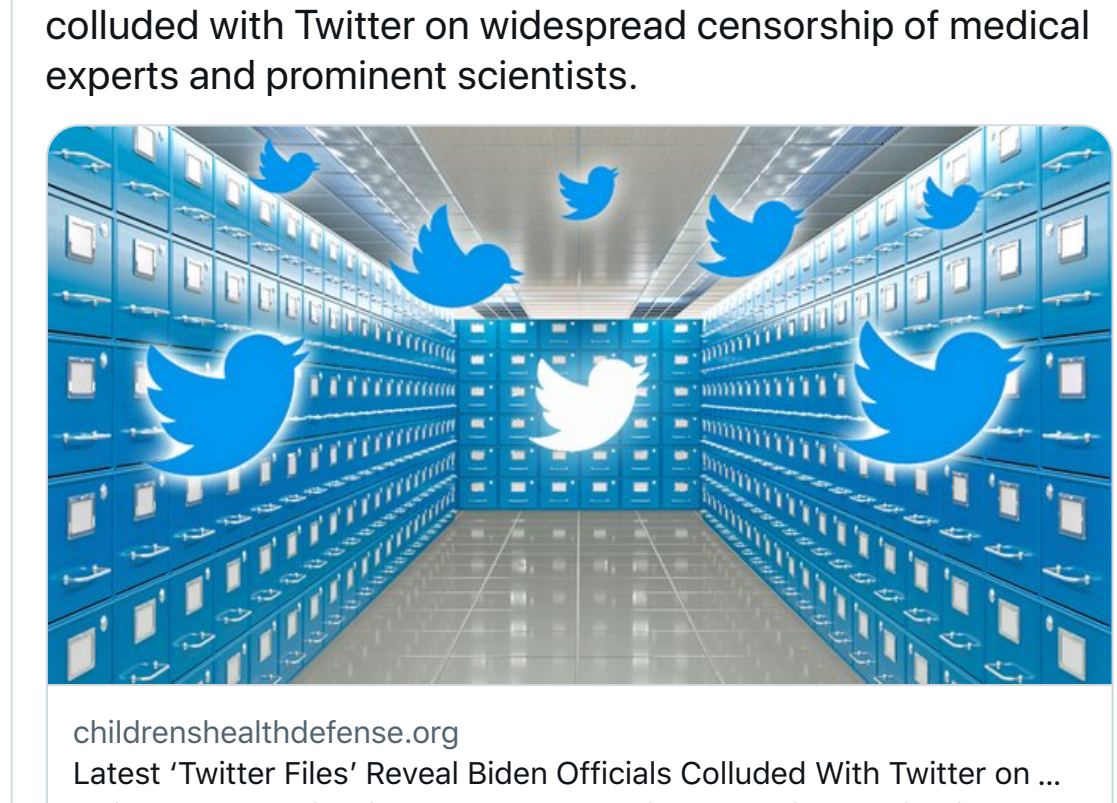
Twitter again initially resisted, stating internally that endorsing the Buzzfeed-University of Sheffield findings "will only embolden them," but soon, Twitter was "apologizing for the same accounts they'd initially told the Senate were not a problem."

Twitter internally conceded that "reporters now know this is a model [pressuring the platform] that works." In the words of Taibbi, "this cycle" of threatened legislation, "scare headlines pushed by congressional/intel sources" and "Twitter caving to moderation asks" would "later be formalized in partnerships with federal law enforcement."

This model is a variation of one recently highlighted by Dr. Joseph Mercola, where the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration — seeking "evidence" to support planned COVID-19-related restrictions — would use "pay-to-play" scientists to publish skewed "studies," which then would be used as evidence to support the proposed restrictions.

As Taibbi noted, "Twitter soon settled on its future posture. In public, it removed content 'at our sole discretion.' Privately, they would 'off-board' anything 'identified by the U.S. intelligence community as a state-sponsored entity conducting cyber-operations.'"

"Twitter let the 'USIC' into its moderation process," wrote Taibbi. "It would not leave." Or, as Crowell said in an internal email, "We will not be reverting to the status quo."



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No surprise here! Latest "Twitter Files' reveal Biden officials colluded with Twitter on widespread censorship of medical experts and prominent scientists.

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Latest 'Twitter Files' Reveal Biden Officials Colluded With Twitter on …
Twitter engaged in widespread censorship of prominent scientists and medical experts for posting content that contradicted the official …

5:54 PM · Jan 3, 2023

24.8K Reply Share

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Government agencies pressured Twitter to flag 'COVID misinformation' and ban specific users

In the second installment of the "Twitter files" released Jan. 3, Taibbi described how the FBI acted as a "belly button for the USG [U.S. government]," how the platform was under pressure by numerous government agencies to remove content, including purported "COVID misinformation" and how many of these requests asked for the removal of specific accounts.

With Twitter having "let the 'USIC' into its moderation process," the platform was, by 2020, "struggling with the problem of public and private agencies bypassing them and going straight to the media with lists of suspect accounts," according to Taibbi. This created immense public pressure on Twitter to take action against those accounts.

For instance, in February 2020, in the early days of the COVID-19 outbreak, a "fledgling analytic/intelligence" arm of the State Department — the GEC — "went to the media with a report called 'Russian Disinformation Apparatus Taking Advantage of Coronavirus Concerns.'"

The GEC, wrote Taibbi, "flagged accounts as 'Russian personas and proxies' based on criteria like 'Describing the Coronavirus as an engineered bioweapon,'" blaming "research conducted at the Wuhan institute," and "attributing the appearance of the virus to the CIA.'"

When Twitter banned ZeroHedge, a popular online news and commentary platform, the GEC also "flagged accounts that retweeted news" about this ban, claiming these retweets "led to another flurry of disinformation narratives." As noted by Taibbi, ZeroHedge "had done reports speculating that the virus had [a] lab origin."

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The external pressure on Twitter was relentless. According to Taibbi, when Clemson University's Media Forensics Hub "complained that Twitter hadn't 'made a Russia attribution' in some time," Yoel Roth, Twitter's then-head of Trust and Safety, "tried in vain to convince" Clemson that the platform was "happy to work directly with you on this, instead of NBC."

The GEC nevertheless continued to produce lists of accounts it considered to be suspicious, threatening to go public with them. In 2020, the GEC threatened to publicize a list of 5,500 accounts it alleged were guilty of amplifying Chinese propaganda and disinformation about COVID-19.

This GEC's list soon snowballed to 250,000 users, including accounts belonging to Canadian officials and a CNN account.

Internally, Roth viewed this "as an attempt by the GEC to … 'insert themselves' into the content moderation club that included Twitter, Facebook, the FBI, DHS, and others."

Indeed, the GEC "wanted to be included in the regular 'industry call' between companies like Twitter and Facebook and the DHS and FBI."

According to Taibbi, "Facebook, Google, and Twitter executives were united in opposition to GEC's inclusion," citing as one reason, "The GEC's mandate for offensive IO [intelligence operations] to promote American interests."

However, Taibbi said, "a deeper reason was a perception that unlike the DHS and FBI, which were 'apolitical' … the GEC was 'political'" — even though, according to Taibbi, Twitter had been "spending years rolling over for Democratic Party requests for 'action' on 'Russia-linked' accounts."

Despite further concerns from Twitter regarding the "press-happy" GEC's inclusion in these calls and a desire to "keep the 'circle of trust small,'" the FBI, via its Supervisory Special Agent Elvis Chan, sought to reassure Twitter, asking industry executives if they could "rely on the FBI to be the belly button of the USG."

Soon, "Twitter was taking requests from every conceivable government body, beginning with the Senate Intel Committee." Indeed, "requests arrived and were escalated from all over: from Treasury, the NSA [National Security Agency], virtually every state, the HHS [Department of Health and Human Services], from the FBI and DHS."

This also included "an astonishing variety of requests from officials asking for individuals they didn't like to be banned," including one instance where "the office for Democrat and House Intel Committee chief Adam Schiff ask[ed] Twitter to ban journalist Paul Sperry."

According to The Gateway Pundit, "Paul Sperry of RealClearInvestigations and a contributor to the New York Post, has been on the Deep State's radar going back to the Clinton Administration. Sperry confronted President Bill Clinton about Chinagate back in the 90s."

Previous installments of the "Twitter files" showed that office staff working for Schiff, who has been an outspoken critic of Musk, were communicating with Twitter. In a Dec. 18, 2022, appearance on CNN's "State of the Union," Schiff offered "immunity" to social media companies if they became "responsible moderators of content."

While Twitter initially "declined to honor Schiff's request," Sperry later was suspended.

Meanwhile, according to Taibbi, "Requests poured in from FBI offices all over the country, day after day, hour after hour: If Twitter didn't act quickly, questions came: "Was action taken?" "Any movement?" Indeed, said Taibbi, "Twitter honored almost everyone else's requests, even those from the GEC."

These requests, Taibbi said, "led to the situation described by @ShellenbergerMD [author and writer Michael Shellenberger] two weeks ago, in which Twitter was paid $3,415,323, essentially for being an overwhelmed subcontractor." Taibbi added, "Twitter wasn't just paid. For the amount of work they did for government, they were underpaid."

Publication of 'Twitter files' set to continue with upcoming release of 'Fauci files'

Prior installments of the "Twitter files" focused on political censorship and the widespread use of secret blacklists and shadow banning, the direct involvement of agencies such as the FBI in censorship on Twitter and Twitter's collusion with the Pentagon and U.S. military to protect accounts perpetuating "propaganda."

Meanwhile, Musk recently foreshadowed the forthcoming release of documents pertaining to Dr. Anthony Fauci. The documents presumably will reveal how Fauci pressured social media platforms in relation to COVID-19-related narratives.

Musk tweeted Jan. 1 that 2023 "won't be boring," and responded to author Juanita Broaddrick's "waiting … for #FauciFiles" tweet with: "Later this week."

One of Twitter's competitors, Gab, a platform that promotes moderation principles that are "drafted in accordance with US law, in particular the First Amendment," is also getting into the act, announcing the launch of the "Gab files" Dec. 29.

In its announcement, Gab stated:

> "Gab is going to begin publishing the purely censorship-based inbound requests that we receive from governments. These are the cases where for the most part European bodies like the Met and Europol send us transparently political takedown requests with no law enforcement purpose."

Referring to one such request the platform received from U.K. authorities, Gab wrote:

> "They didn't tell us who the person is who allegedly broke this dystopian nonsense law, they didn't tell us whether the content which they convicted him of was found on our site, and they didn't specify which posts, if any, actually violated UK law.
>
> "They simply told us that they imprisoned someone for expressing wrongthink online, that person had a Gab account and the UK government expected us to unperson this person from the Internet at their behest when no violation of our TOS [terms of service] was found."

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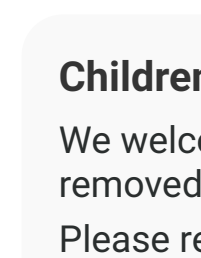

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Michael Nevradakis, Ph.D., based in Athens, Greece, is a senior reporter for The Defender and part of the rotation of hosts for CHD.TV's "Good Morning CHD."

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LOG IN WITH · OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS ?

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10 • Share · Best Newest Oldest

Ave Bkr · 10 days ago
I think this was the "healing" and "unity" Biden and his people were promising early on... isn't it? No? How'd that "dark winter" for the unvaxxed turn out, by the way?
10 0 • Reply • Share ›

GarySummers → Ave Bkr · 6 days ago
Hopefully RFK. Jr., CHD hold them Accountable?
"Newly Discovered Emails in MO and LA Government Lawsuit Reveal Biden Regime Pressured Facebook to Censor Tucker Carlson and "Targeting" of [Robert Kennedy, Jr."]

AG Jeff Landry also released a Facebook document telling the White House on "how to censor Robert Kennedy, Jr.'s Children's Health Defense Fund".
https://www.thegatewaypundi...
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SuziAlkamyst → GarySummers · 6 days ago
I just hope Kennedy doesn't waste his time on this distraction!
0 0 • Reply • Share ›

GarySummers · 10 days ago edited
IMO: Silicone Valley, CCP/Globalist, Owned US Govt Officials, Globalist, WEF, Elites, wish to turn USA into their Role Model, Red China. Hopefully Americans Will Wake Up? What we have found out is the Elites, and their Counterparts Control the Narrative on Social Media? If you disagree with us we will deplatform you, and shut you out of your Bank Accounts, like the Truckers in Canada?

Are Electric cars really about saving Energy or Restricting Peoples Travel, okay to destroy South America, and parts of Africa for Minerals in the Battery's? The Elites need legions of Serfs, not Critical Thinkers.

If you can get off of Social Media do it, and we need more Independent Newspapers.
9 0 • Reply • Share ›

RbrtII · 10 days ago
Why stop at 250,000? Just ban anyone who isn't Biden, Clinton, Fauci, or a Democratic party operative/globalist... problem solves (obviously this is sarcasm).
9 0 • Reply • Share ›

GarySummers · 10 days ago
"Thinking"
Looks like Alex Berenson, Unreported Truths, Substack, is seeking Justice, Hopefully others?
James Lawrence, who represented me in my lawsuit against Twitter, has already sent "demand letters" to Gottlieb, Pfizer, and Slavitt notifying them that we plan to sue. We have several grounds, likely including a conspiracy to interfere with my civil rights - in this case, my First Amendment right to free speech.
https://alexberenson.substa...
7 0 • Reply • Share ›

lr-82 · 10 days ago
Create the"problem" then create the "solution" to that problem... the tried-and-true method of tyrants, seen here once again with the so called "Russian meddling" and "Chinese disinformation"...
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tag → lr-82 · 10 days ago
And the fake virus and the jab to fix it. Safe and effective? Only for some pocketbooks.
4 0 • Reply • Share ›

jwm79 · 10 days ago
Funny how it usually takes just a few months for "conspiracy theory" to become "conspiracy fact"!
6 0 • Reply • Share ›

tag → jwm79 · 10 days ago
fiction to fact. 6 months tops. And yet, they just keep trying. I can smell the fear in the air!
3 0 • Reply • Share ›

kaoshispano → tag · 9 days ago edited
Not for THEY pay their crimes against humanity.... they make you pay and you get like an idiot victim. The psicoSOCIAL INSITUTES of the bilderberg are working it for long decades.
0 1 • Reply • Share ›

tag → kaoshispano · 9 days ago
Only if you allow yourself to be. The bilderbergs, CFR and others have been at it for a long time. My father taught me about them and their evil ways. i refuse to abide by their nonsense and suggest you do the same. We can't win the war with wimps. stand up and fight against them and the current administration if you want to live in a free country. if not? MOVE!
0 0 • Reply • Share ›

tag · 10 days ago
Never twittered so can't comment. I was taken down on other "social media" crap. Funny how if you question the official narrative, you get silenced. Ask the thousands of credible Dr.'s and scientist that have also been de-platformed for telling the truth. Tells me without a doubt who i should listen to and it ain't twitter!
5 0 • Reply • Share ›

tamarque · 10 days ago
What is good about this article is that it IS minimalist in its claims
and uses a variety of MSM sources. This makes it one of the few that
touches on this mutation by 'vaccine' that might be read by many of the
true believers. So while it is easy to be cynical about the lateness
and mildness it can serve a good purpose to open closed minds of many of
our 'good' intellectual liberals.
4 0 • Reply • Share ›

SuziAlkamyst · 6 days ago
Nothing new here...we're being played all the time..."Look at this"..."Ooh! Ahh!...They have to tell us what they're dong, even if it's after the fact, but we have been warned...the infrastructure gets larger every day, more cell phone masts killing off more kinds of life; chem-trails every day all over the planet spraying what???...We have been warned...the internet of everything...us included... whilst our attention is constantly being dragged elsewhere, The twitter files haven't killed anyone or anything, even though it's disgusting to be censored, war does, as does, and will 5g.
0 0 • Reply • Share ›

Achilles Spears · 6 days ago
It's interesting just how gullible we are supposed to be. Take for instance the absurd claim that theories about the Covid virus being deliberately manufactured by the Chinese is "Russian disinformation". That makes absolutely zero sense. China is a big time ally of Russia's! If any disinformation is coming from Russia they would obviously be implicating US allies not their own! Use a very small amount of reasoning and common sense and their lies are transparent.
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Double_Up · 10 days ago
I suppose the best answer is "No."
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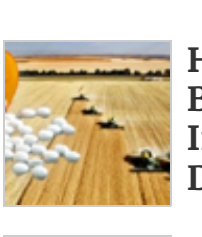

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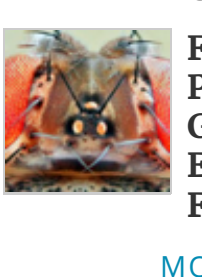

'Airtight Evidence' Exxon Knew for Decades How Much Damage Its Product Caused

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